Conceptualising and exploring examples of grassroots teacher professional development

Holme, Richard; Schofield, Susie; Lakin, Liz

Published in:
Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal

Publication date:
2020

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Conceptualising and exploring examples of grassroots teacher professional development

Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal

Vol 12(1) pages 25-37

Richard Holme[1], Susie Schofield[2], Elizabeth Lakin[3]
[1]School of Education and Social Work, University of Dundee, Dundee, Scotland
[2]Centre for Medical Education, School of Medicine, University of Dundee, Dundee, Scotland
[3]School of Education and Social Work, University of Dundee, Dundee, Scotland

Abstract
This paper considers the under researched area relating to defining and conceptualising non-formal teacher professional development. It makes the case for adopting the general term grassroots professional development, specifically when this is self-directed activity led by educators. The article serves the purpose of being a position paper for this term and associated activities and continues by exploring three examples of grassroots professional development, specifically events organised by educators (TeachMeets, EdCamps and BrewEd). The history of each example is discussed, drawing on the limited body of published research literature, plus grey sources and personal experiences of the lead author. This paper is intended to provide a definitive start point for further research on the general topic of grassroots teacher professional development, and these examples in particular. The commonalties of each example are also considered, along with some criticisms and considerations for practitioners. In doing so this paper also proposes the next steps for research in this area, namely investigation of the effectiveness of grassroots professional development.

Keywords
Teacher professional development; grassroots; informal professional learning; teacher CPD; TeachMeet; Edcamp; BrewEd.

Introduction
The importance of teacher professional development (PD) is widely accepted, and is essential within the wider school improvement agenda (Borko, 2004). Policy makers recognise this and in doing so high-quality PD is a commonly occurring component in practically all modern day attempts to improve education (Guskey, 2002). Despite this it is widely acknowledged that the value and effectiveness of teacher professional development (PD) can differ considerably with certain characteristics correlating to far more effective PD (Cordingley et al., 2015). This leads to the conclusion that conceptualisation of PD, and what makes it effective, is essential for leaders, policy makers, and most importantly the practitioners.

Whilst discussing the conceptualisation of teacher PD Kennedy (2014, p.689) argues '...teachers' CPD as a whole is partial in its coverage, is fragmented and is under-theorised'. Furthermore, Neil and Morgan (2003, p.1) comment that 'the term continuing professional development (CPD) may not be interpreted in the same way by different key players in the educational world'. This suggests teacher PD is an area of education where the meaning, related activity, and even purpose is debated and disputed. Whereas much of the focus on teacher PD concentrates on formal activity or developmental initiatives there is a variety of recent innovations in teacher-led PD, including the global TeachMeet movement (McIntosh, 2006), Edcamps in the US (Swanson, 2014), and BrewEd in the UK (Egan-Smith and Finch, 2018). Furthermore, it

Citation
Holme, R., Schofield, S. and Lakin, E. (2020) 'Conceptualising and exploring examples of grassroots teacher professional development, *TEAN journal,* 12(1), pp. 25-37

appears that these events are encouraging new professional learning networks to flourish, which mirror Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP).

Wenger argues a CoP is more than a group of individuals, but there are three key shared characteristics. These include a common domain of interest in this case educators learning about learning. Secondly the way the group interacts is crucial, with mutual engagement essential, leading to formation of a 'social entity' (Wenger, 1998, p.2). Finally the CoP will generate a shared capabilities, and a unique, member driven way of working. Critically a CoP goes beyond being a work group or department, and unlike an informal network has a clear shared focus which develops over time (Wenger, 1998).

Clearly it appears that the landscape of teacher PD is evolving, and as a result there may be even greater uncertainty amongst teachers as to what is, or is not, professional development.

Terminology of teacher development

Given the relatively long history of teaching as a profession it may seem strange that a single accepted definition of teacher development is not available. A cursory review of various literature relating to teacher development reveals a wide range of labels applied to teacher development. In their review of this topic O'Brien and Jones (2014) draw attention to the gradual evolution away from In-Service Training, or INSET, toward the more commonly used titles or labels of Professional Development and Professional Learning. The generic term Professional Development has long been utilised by researchers including Guskey (2000) and Evans (2014) with this term favoured in the US education sector (O'Brien and Jones, 2014). Within the UK there are subtle differences, with many authors using CPD, whereas in Scotland the term Career-Long Professional Learning is preferred by the government agency Education Scotland and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS, 2019).

The conclusion from this very brief analysis seems to be that if labels for teacher PD are debated then the associated characteristics and activity will be too. Furthermore, if there is uncertainty around formal PD then this is likely to be even greater with non-formal PD.

Non-formal teacher professional development

The imbalance between theory and research into formal and non-formal teacher PD is highlighted by Evans who argues for a change in emphasis stating 'we need to fix our attention more squarely and more determinedly than has hitherto been the case on informal professional development' (Evans, 2018, p.9). This is also reflected in practice as examples of teacher-led development activity seem to becoming more prevalent, or at least more obvious, for example via TeachMeets or through the use of social media platforms, in particular Twitter.

In the analysis, and subsequent recommendations for practice, of formal school-based professional development OFSTED explore the idea of a systematic or 'Logical Chain' approach to PD (OFSTED, 2006). Furthermore, they state that a clear outcome is required for effective PD, and this may be more challenging with non-formal teacher learning. In some ways this may seem to be the antithesis to non-formal although OFSTED (2006) also acknowledge this is not linear but a cyclical process. They also highlight the importance of personalisation of PD and value of ongoing evaluation, which may also be present with less formal versions of teacher PD.

The formal standards for professional development in England (Department for Education, 2016) draw a distinction between direct PD and indirect PD. It is suggested that indirect PD could include, for example, attendance at conference to raise awareness of new ideas. In addition teacher PD should include the

opportunity for collaboration and 'expert challenge' (Department for Education, 2016, p.). Non-formal professional development may, in fact, afford the opportunities for this. A similar argument can be made for Scotland where the Standards for Career-Long Professional Learning require that teachers will commit to lifelong enquiry, learning, professional development, and collaborative practice, which could also be achieved through formal, and non-formal ways (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012). Despite this there is no explicit reference in this guidance to informal or non-formal PD.

Some research literature that covers less formal avenues for teacher development has been executed, in particular focussing on social media (Carpenter, 2016b; Carpenter and Krutka, 2014; Forte et al., 2012; Rutherford, 2013), but most sources, perhaps unsurprisingly, are less formal in nature e.g. news media, social media, and blogs. This issue, and the relative newness of these forms of PD, provides a challenge for researchers wishing to investigate this further. This paper proceeds by considering and exploring the less formal versions of teacher PD, beginning with associated labels, terms and definitions.

Definition and conceptualisation of non-formal professional development

Recently Evans (2018) has attempted to conceptualise and define informal teacher PD, initially by making connection to implicit learning, the definitions and discussions provided by Eraut (2004) highlighting that implicit learning is a form of informal learning. Evans (2018) then draws particular attention to the flexibility and freedom afforded to learners, which aligns with the view of Richter et al (2011, p.117) who added that teachers are 'not merely recipients of knowledge' but instead are able to 'organise the learning process and determine their learning goals and strategies independently'. Evans builds on this by citing research from the field of psychology and introducing implicit learning (Reber, 1993) which is characterised by unconscious acquisition of knowledge and crucially, is independent of a conscious attempt to learn (Evans, 2018). Therefore as a broad concept there appears to be value in attempting to understand this better, but before the characteristics and a shared understanding can be researched a suitable label is required as a starting point.

Alternative terminology within non-formal professional development

As already explored, the terminology relating to formal teacher professional development is varied, if this is the case for formal PD then the situation for non-formal PD is even more diverse. There is also limited research in this area. One explanation for a lack of research into non-formal PD could be that there is no accountable body or formal organisation involved and as a result no formal evaluation is required.

A search of the academic and grey literature reveals a range of terms in operation referring to the general area of non-formal teacher PD. Whilst investigating teachers' informal learning Kyndt et al. (2016) opt to use the term 'everyday professional development'. This does not seem suitable as formal PD could also occur regularly, and every day. Research from the US focusing on non-formal teacher PD (such as social media and EdCamps) has included terms 'self-directed', 'self-guided learning' and even 'teacher-powered PD', without providing a concrete definition (Carpenter, 2016a). Of these suggestions self-directed learning seems a suitable term, but the use of learning suggests a broader application. From this it can be seen that authors and researchers in this area, illustrated by Carpenter in particular, have a tendency to use terms interchangeably, and one interpretation may be that this is not a problem.

More practitioner-focussed sources, such as texts to help teachers and leaders have also considered the general idea of non-formal PD. Allison (2014, p.7), in the text 'Perfect Teacher-led CPD', proposes a 'layered approach to CPD' including 'blanket' (such as formal in-service CPD and training), 'optional' (to include peer observation or action research) and 'directed' (such as mentoring and coaching). The

implication, although not explicitly stated, is that teachers have opportunity to pursue their own PD interests within the formal school-based systems and structures.

Another term that has been suggested, possibly reflecting the less than conventional nature of the PD activity, is 'rogue professional development' (Czyz, 2017). The final label to consider, used by a range of authors, in different settings and with differing interpretations, is 'Do-It-Yourself (DIY) PD' (Bloom, 2016; Lloyd, 2010; Nerantzi, 2014). The labels DIY or Rogue PD may carry an additional negative meaning, being interpreted as unprofessional or subversive.

Whilst discussing the use of social media platform Twitter for teacher PD purposes Forte (2012) uses the term 'grassroots' and seems to assume shared understanding of this term. The 'grassroots' label is also applied by the originators of the BrewEd movement (Egan-Smith and Finch, 2018). The link back to social media is important as this technology has supported the development of movements including TeachMeet, EdCamps and BrewEd. This is also a term that is regularly associated with community based education, and so has clear parallels to Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998). Despite this lack of clear definition within these sources 'grassroots' seem the most suitable label as it encapsulates the teacher-led or teacher-owned element, whilst simultaneously rejecting the formality of traditional organised PD.

As there are a variety of labels and terms being used in literature, it is tempting to avoid settling on a single term altogether. However, if this field of teacher development is expanding, and is to be researched more, then having a clear starting definition is required. Based on the literature examined thus far, the term 'grassroots' seems most suitable, and the following definition for grassroots PD is proposed:

> Developmental activity that is instigated by the teacher or educator, and is not primarily organised or controlled by a formal body or organisation.

The paper will continue with a more detailed examination of three examples of PD that represent grassroots PD.

Examples of grassroots PD

It is likely that grassroots PD has always been a feature of the wider educational landscape. Although Wenger's conceptualisation of Communities of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998) is now more than two decades old, events or movements have developed since then which have made it easier to exemplify examples of specific activity that share characteristics of CoPs. Wenger's theory approaches 'learning as a social system' and more importantly those who 'are fully engaged in the process of creating, refining, communicating, and using knowledge' (Wenger, 1998, p.1). This neatly sums up those who engage in the events, especially as the social element play a prominent role.

As introduced in the previous section, recent developments of non-formal teacher PD include TeachMeets (McIntosh, 2006), EdCamps (Swanson, 2014) and the most recent evolution in this area BrewEd (Egan-Smith and Finch, 2018). These three examples are all utilised in the education sector, and by teachers, and all three sit within the wider category of unconferences (Amond, 2019) and are characterised by a lack of formal control. One of the challenges of exploring this topic is, due to the informal nature of it, formal peer-reviewed research literature is limited (Carpenter and Linton, 2016). As a result the discussion will be supplemented by grey literature, and where possible framed within the author's personal experience of engaging with these events.

TeachMeets

The earliest formerly recorded example of teachers meeting to discuss the profession and their practice, with a common purpose of learning from each other, dates back to 2006 in Glasgow, Scotland (McIntosh, 2016), with the first meeting titled ScotEduBlogger (McIntosh, 2016). This informal event was attended by a mix of teachers and related educational professionals (including those from academia and a local authority). McIntosh (2016) states that initial intentions were to avoid formal sponsorship or to be commercialised. Furthermore, it was seen as important that there was no need for trustees or organisers, which at the time was quite different (certainly in the UK) to CPD delivered at school level or by a local authority or similar agency. As the TeachMeet idea caught on, it quickly spread as far as Australia (Esterman, 2011) and into related sectors of education such as library services (Tumelty et al., 2012). As the popularity increased, the format began to evolve, and TeachMeet made an appearance at the Scottish Learning Festival and then the British Educational Technology Training Show (BETTS) in 2010 (Blane, 2009). This provided a clue that grassroots approach to PD was becoming recognised by the traditional custodians of professional development.

It was around 2010 that the lead author (RH) attended a TeachMeet whilst working as a primary (elementary) teacher in the North East of England. The event did not exactly match the original model proposed by McIntosh (2016) as there was a sponsor (an educational publisher) who funded the room hire and provided refreshments, including a buffet, which was very well-received at the end of a long day teaching. Although RH did not know any other attendees he was welcomed, and enjoyed engaging with them and the various presenters. Although RH felt he had developed intellectually, for example one discussion focussed on the teacher's role in the development of the English National Curriculum, RH also felt he had developed attitudinally, especially within what Evans (2014) identifies as the motivational dimension. He returned to work feeling more positive about his position in the teaching profession.

Despite positive personal early experiences RH also observes, that more recently, TeachMeets have evolved from being truly grassroots as establishment organisations have become more involved. TeachMeets have continued to feature at the Scottish Learning Festival, and in 2017 the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) became involved in the event, publicising it heavily. RH also attended a TeachMeet where a representative of local authority presented, a new Additional Support Need tracking tool which they wanted teachers to adopt. This was a departure from the original ethos of TeachMeet and meant the session had more of a feel of traditional top-down PD. It was after this event that one experienced attendee reflected that TeachMeets may have had their day.

EdCamp

The EdCamp phenomenon has many similarities to TeachMeets, emerging four years later (McIntosh, 2016), with the first EdCamp taking place in May 2010, in Philadelphia (Wake and Mills, 2018). EdCamps, predominantly operate in the United States although have also occurred in over twenty different countries, including Canada, Sweden and on fewer occasions in various other locations across Asia, Africa and Europe (Carpenter and Linton, 2016). EdCamps have their origins in the Unconference movement (Carpenter, 2016b) and draw on the principles of Open Space technologies (Owen, 2008), including the 'rule of two feet' where participants can simply leave a session if they feel it has no benefit. Usually there is no set agenda, which appears to be a key difference to TeachMeets and in particular BrewEd where presenters volunteer or are announced in advance. In an EdCamp the attendees volunteer for, and select to attend, presentations that have been proposed on the day, with organisers putting together the schedule in situ. Everyone is considered capable of making equal contribution to presenter which is intended to reduce the risk of passive participation (Carpenter and Linton, 2016). There is also no

commercial interest, although organisers may seek sponsorship for things like refreshments or raffle prizes (Wake and Mills, 2018).

Research into the experiences of teachers attending EdCamps (Carpenter and Linton, 2016; Phan, 2017; Wake and Mills, 2018; Whitlock, 2016) suggests that participants value the opportunity to develop practically (such as learning new skills, gaining knowledge) and attitudinally, within the affective domain, such as opportunities for collaboration. Drawing on empirical research Wake and Mills (2018, p.103) drew the conclusion that teachers valued 'learning and participation opportunities where they have some control and where they can collaborate with others'. The positive experiences of those attending EdCamps correlates with research carried out by Carpenter (2016b) and Carpenter and Linton (2016) with this later study identifying that the opportunity to collaborate, and learn with and from others, was again highly important. During doctoral research Phan (2017) identified a number of other key reasons for participant engagement in EdCamps including the opportunity to access to new knowledge, a chance to find and engage with like-minded people, and that it was a safe place to share. Furthermore the participants in Phan's study thought that EdCamps gave access to quality PD resulting in an altered attitude. Interestingly this was not something envisaged at the beginning of the EdCamp movement, but may address Evans' observation that much teacher PD overlooks attitudinal development (Evans, 2014).

BrewEd

The final, and most recent innovation amongst the three examples being discussed here is BrewEd, which began in Sheffield, England in 2017 (Jackson, 2019), over a decade after the inaugural TeachMeet took place in Scotland. In many ways the ethos and approach to BrewEd matches the first guiding principles of TeachMeet (McIntosh, 2016), with the most striking similarity being the location, often a pub, but could also be a community centre or café (Finch, 2019a). This element of being in a less formal environment was seen as crucial as this meant it was a more relaxed experience for participants (Finch, 2019a). They were also aiming at having less connection to a particular ideological viewpoint (Jackson, 2019). Finch openly acknowledges the influence of TeachMeet and goes as far to say that it is essentially the same idea (Finch, 2019b). The guiding principles include a balance between presentations and discussion, an opportunity for cross-sector collaboration, and equitable opportunity for involvement. Speakers can range from chalk-face teachers to CEOs of a multi academy trust, and there is no commercial involvement, prices are kept very low and people donate their time, and the events are genuinely social in location and activity (Finch, 2019a).

The 9th of February 2019 was a notable day for the BrewEd movement as four events took place simultaneously around the UK (Jackson, 2019): Bristol, Birmingham, Wimbledon and the one RH attended in Preston. In the same way RH enjoyed the experience of his first TeachMeet he felt that BrewEd Preston was a valuable experience. There was a mix of professionals in attendance, including teachers from a variety of settings, educational consultants, and even academics from teacher education. In some ways the day had more of a feel of a traditional conference with a series of speakers. The style of these, and wide ranging subject matter seemed to result in them being engaging and well-received. Despite the lack of organised discussion during presentations the organisers allowed considerable time for networking and for participants to meet, and the informal and relaxed atmosphere was probably helped by the location being a pub. The overriding impression from the day was this was very similar to the ethos and approach adopted by the first TeachMeets. This may be unsurprising given the similar ethos and shared practical organisational factors, but there also seem to be other common factors which will now be considered.

Discussion

It appears that both EdCamps and BrewEd are still developing whereas TeachMeets seem to have become less common in recent years. In Scotland, where at the time of writing BrewEd events had yet to take place, the Pedagoo movement (Blane, 2012; Pedagoo, 2019) organises TeachMeet style events and encourages teacher-led PD via Twitter. As times change, and the key supporters and participants also change, it seems inevitable that grassroots PD will continue to evolve and develop. However, the main shared theme across all three approaches discussed here is they share is the philosophy of being 'bottom up', which it has been suggested is on the rise in recent years (Bennett, 2012). What would be useful to know is how this could be used to support more general teacher development and impact on learner outcome. Before doing this, the start point is to understand the shared characteristics of grassroots PD, and this article will attempt this next.

Use of technology to collaborate

The first common factor is the use of social media and technology to publicise, facilitate and then build on the professional development started at these grassroots events (Wake and Mills, 2018). The TeachMeet movement (which started as ScotEduBlogger) may have taken off because it coincided with the development of open-source editable web-based tools (such as wikis) that allowed like-minded teachers to link up, and develop their professional learning networks. Clearly these grassroots PD activities have strong similarities to Wenger's Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998), and Phan (2017) also argues that the advent of Web 2.0, where the web moved from static HTML to more interactive and dynamic pages, editable by users rather than coders, has reduced the constraints placed on traditional, formal PD, thus enabling easier collaboration.

One criticism levelled at TeachMeets is that technology, in particular showcasing of educational gadgetry, may detract from the intended objective (Bennett, 2012). Of course the presence of this may have been due to many participants, who connected through technology-enhanced professional learning networks, being early adopters of educational technology. This was also witnessed during BrewEd Preston several speakers talked about use of technology for teaching (such as blogging with pupils). Furthermore, recent research into participant perceptions of EdCamps (Carpenter, 2016b; Carpenter and MacFarlane, 2018; Phan, 2017) suggests that the chance to learn about technology, and apply this to teaching, is an advantage. This is supported by empirical research (Carpenter and Linton, 2016) who found a fifth of attendees at a particular EdCamp declared an interest in learning about technology.

Despite the fact that technology is facilitating grassroots PD, it is not known what percentage of the education population are unaware of, or choosing not to access information about these opportunities. In addition the use of social media, such as Twitter, may discourage certain groups of teachers from engaging. Research from Joyce and Showers (2002) suggests that at either end of the spectrum of professionals two groups of teachers exist. The 'gourmet omnivores' will seek out opportunities for PD, such as attending grassroots PD events, whereas the 'reticent consumers' will be unwilling to engage. The main implication of this will be, unlike with formal mandated PD, there will be no 'reticent consumers' present which could otherwise detract from the experience of the 'gourmet omnivores'.

Equality and collaboration

The relevance of cross-sector collaboration is highlighted in the guiding principles of the BrewEd movement, and mirrored in EdCamp events (Wake and Mills, 2018). Teachers who have engaged in these events suggest the opportunity for collaboration is greater than in traditional PD and also value this, even when the event is mandated by local school board (Carpenter and MacFarlane, 2018). Carpenter and Linton (2016) also argue that successful engagement with EdCamps requires collaboration. Therefore, it

seems, teachers who are more collaborative in nature are attracted to grassroots PD and this in turn enhances the experience of all attendees. This has similarities to the rhythm (Cordingley et al., 2015) or the cyclical nature (OFSTED, 2006) needed for effective formal PD. The presence of collaboration is also present in Wenger's Community of Practice (1998) theory. The key factors such of activity being a joint enterprise, and mutual engagement are common in all the examples being discussed.

Another area where there are overlaps to theory of CoP (Wenger, 1998) is that grassroots PD will operate across boundaries. Literature investigating EdCamps has illustrated that attendees can come from a range of sectors and are attended by leaders, teachers and support personnel who meet on an equal level (Linton et al., 2017). The cross-sectionalist nature of BrewEd and TeachMeets is evident in the varied background of attendees. Taking the example of the recent BrewEd Preston, there were a range of participants and speakers ranging from teachers, leaders and consultants, and the BrewEd Charter (the loose guidance provided by the movement's founders) also highlights the importance of cross-sector collaboration (Finch, 2019a). Mirroring this, at the very first TeachMeet, teachers from different sectors and teacher educators present (McIntosh, 2016). Linton et al. (2017) summarise this as an opportunity for crossing boundaries and propose that an advantage is that school leaders or administrators are more likely to have ideas challenged, which may not be possible in more traditional PD. Interestingly this element of challenge something that is encouraged by the Department for Education (2016) in the standards for professional development, in England.

Research into teachers' perceptions of EdCamps (Phan, 2017; Wake and Mills, 2018) shows that attendees appreciate the chance to voice their opinions, and engage in discussion. However, a potential downside of participants finding their voice, especially if mixing with like-minded peers, is that critical debate and discussion might be stymied. In addition participants may be likely to conform to a specific view or ideological position. In this respect grassroots PD activity or events may become 'echo chambers' and even separate the participants further from the wider teaching profession. This is another important consideration for anyone planning these events, but the presence of different groups, including leaders and administrators (Linton et al., 2017), may mitigate against this.

Lack of controlling interest

The lack of an overarching formal body or organisation, which would be the case with a local government led intervention, is a key facet of all three examples. Closely related to the theme of equality is control, and in the case of grassroots PD the lack of control. Linton et al. (2017), whilst discussing EdCamps, draw attention to this lack of a formal hierarchy stating 'Nowhere else do teachers, teacher leaders, support personnel, and principals meet on such equal footing, with such chances to share their unvarnished opinions with each other' (p.43). This will have an impact on fostering trust; those engaging in grassroots PD maybe see themselves as part of an in-group (Tschannen-Moran, 2017), mixing with like-minded individuals, which may result in increased motivation and participants responding positively. However, as discussed in the previous section there is potential for development of an echo-chamber, and as with other forms of professional learning communities for participants to lose a 'critical edge' and 'be left to stew in their own (comfortable, but uncritical) juices' (McArdle and Coutts, 2010, p.210).

As witnessed at BrewEd Preston, the general guidance and structures are sometimes applied more loosely, and from talking to participants there can be local differences in the style and execution of these events. Traditionally with formal PD this lack of consistency and parity of experience would be seen as problematic, but the lack of accountability means this is no longer a factor. Furthermore, from speaking to participants they seem to value this variety, flexibility, and ownership. In Wenger's CoP (1998) this 'permeable periphery' permits members to participate and contribute in different ways. This is also

reflected within the research into EdCamp participants as 'choice and voice' (Phan, 2017). As indicated by the lead-author's first-hand personal experiences, these activities all seem to involve participants with positive outlook and attitude. A problem is the informality means that these events do not meet Wenger's strict criteria for a CoP (1998) as this is 'more than a network' (Wenger, 1998, p.4). That said, those who regularly contribute and engage in BrewEd or EdCamp events certainly 'engage in a collective process of learning' (Wenger, p.4).

There are examples of formal organisations becoming involved in both TeachMeets (see earlier discussion relating to the Scottish Learning Festival) and with EdCamps, coordinated by a local school district (Carpenter and MacFarlane, 2018). Perhaps unsurprisingly, when teachers were mandated to attend an EdCamp the event has been viewed less favourably than when events were not coordinated by a formal organisation, and attendance was voluntary (Carpenter and MacFarlane, 2018). This may act as a word of warning to formal organisations planning to take advantage of the popularity of grassroots events. In doing so they may remove one of the key factors that makes attendance attractive. Currently there is no evidence that this has happened with the BrewEd movement, but maybe this is simply because it is still a new phenomenon, and so is in one of the earlier stages of development of the CoP theory (Wenger, 1998). This issue of blocking vested interests or formal organisations also presents event organisers with a dilemma. If they stop formal organisations, or their representatives, attending, this would simply reflect a different example of power and even protectionism. Therefore, perhaps those employed by formal organisations, and this includes higher education and the academy, should respect these grassroots events and minimise their involvement.

Financial cost and funding

The three examples of grassroots PD discussed in this paper are all free, or extremely low cost for the participants. The Preston BrewEd, referred to above, cost just over £10 for the entry ticket, the organiser Drew Foster explained this was to cover some basic catering and the venue hire (Foster, 2019). Attendance at TeachMeets have always been free as are EdCamps, with associated hosting costs being met by partner organisations (possibly sponsors). In comparison to this formal academic conferences, which are usually run during school term time, rather than on evenings, holidays or weekends, cost hundreds of pounds. In fact it has been suggested that when organisations, such as Universities, try to charge for venues, the EdCamp organisers will simply say they have no funds and are eventually offered the facilities without charge (Milton and Krutka, 2018). Another interesting common feature is that with all three events the presenters also self-fund, and do not claim expenses, which may add to the feeling of equitability, as discussed earlier. The final point here is that EdCamps may provide door prizes, where participants are given a ticket for a raffle on arrival (Wake and Mills, 2018) and BrewEd events often finish with a raffle, with low value prizes drawn from a rucksack (Finch, 2019a). This has some similarities to welcome bags given out at formal academic or professional conferences, but with a less formal or corporate feel.

Criticism of measurable value or benefit

The main criticism that could be levelled at these examples of grassroots PD is the lack of published evidence that these directly impact learner outcome. This is a problem that also exist with more formal examples of teacher PD. Attempts to study this will be highly problematic as to do so requires a structured approach and system which may in turn impact on the authenticity and freedom to participate that makes these forms of PD attractive. Furthermore, Carpenter and Linton (2016) draw attention to some ways in which the EdCamps model does not align with literature on effective PD. Despite these challenges this should not be a reason to reject further research in this area, and the next section will consider how this could be focussed.

Conclusion and future research

The first half of this article draws attention to the lack of clarity around terminology and definitions for less formal, teacher-led examples of PD. Although the term grassroots is suggested here this should also carry the caveat that definitions and terminology will evolve, and disagreement on this topic may have to be accepted, especially if there is a risk this will detract from the actual activity. This uncertainty is also present in the three examples of grassroots PD activity (TeachMeet, EdCamps, and BrewEd) as they can be interpreted and delivered differently, especially as they evolve in future. In the case of the oldest example, TeachMeets, it also seems the original ethos or approach has changed which may, or may not, be to the detriment of the perceived value.

Although Carpenter and Linton (2016) suggest there is lack of formal research on EdCamps, there is still considerably more available than for TeachMeets and BrewEd. This is unsurprising given their smaller scale, and lack of involvement of policy makers and academia, and but it also means the topic of grassroots teacher PD is fertile ground for more original research. Furthermore, this article has deliberately not considered whether grassroots teacher PD has a direct impact on teacher ability and learner achievement or attainment. This is an area that is under-researched, with no obvious, rigorous research available and so could provide a focus for future investigation. It seems that teachers will form, and engage with, CoPs and PLNs utilising the activities and events as and when they are needed. Therefore, how these three examples have, and continue to, evolve and occupy different points in the CoP stages of development continuum (Wenger, 1998, p.3) offers another potential area for exploration.

Although the nature of grassroots PD may evolve over time understanding the motivations, and potential for, or lack, of value of this activity should benefit the wider education community, especially as previous participants have expressed an interest in developing affectively (Carpenter and Linton, 2016). Having considered existing research it is important to acknowledge that respondent bias, in that attendees are likely to view any activity they have opted in to positively, presents a serious limitation (Wake and Mills, 2018) and clearly this must be factored in when planning future research. Nonetheless, given the recent rise in prevalence of grassroots teacher PD, in particularly with the three examples discussed here, research in this area should provide an opportunity to understand the impact on teachers, and ultimately learners.

References

Allison, S. (2014) *Perfect teacher-led CPD*. Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.

Amond, M. (2019) Owed to some unconference heroes. magsamondposts. Available at: https://magsamond.com/2019/09/22/owed-to-some-unconference-heroes/. (Accessed: 11 May 2020).

Blane, D. (2009) Scottish Learning Festival - Mini presentations make micro waves for ideas. Times Educational Supplement Scotland. Available at: https://www.tes.com/news/scottish-learning-festival-mini-presentations-make-micro-waves-ideas (Accessed: 11 May 2020)

Blane, D. (2012) Pedagoo provides a leg-up. The Times Educational Supplement Scotland. Available at: https://www.tes.com/news/pedagoo-provides-leg (Accessed: 11 May 2020)

Bloom, A. (2016) The teachers pursuing 'DIY professional development'. Scotland: Times Educational Supplement.

Borko, H. (2004) 'Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain', *Educational researcher*, 33, pp. 3-15.

Carpenter, J. P. (2016a) 'Teachers at the Wheel', *Educational Leadership*, 73, pp. 30-35.

Carpenter, J. P. (2016b) 'Unconference professional development: Edcamp participant perceptions and motivations for attendance', *Professional Development in Education*, 42, pp. 78-99.

Carpenter, J. P. and Krutka, D. G. (2014) 'How and Why Educators Use Twitter: A Survey of the Field', *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 46, pp. 414-434.

Carpenter, J. P. and Linton, J. N. (2016) 'Edcamp unconferences: Educators' perspectives on an untraditional professional learning experience', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 57, pp. 97-108.

Carpenter, J. P. and MacFarlane, M. R. (2018) 'Educator perceptions of district-mandated Edcamp unconferences', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 75, pp. 71-82.

Cordingley, P., Higgins, S., Greany, T., Buckler, N.,Coles-Jordan, D.,Crisp, B.,Saunders, L. and Coe, R. (2015) *Developing great teaching: lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development*. London: Teacher Development Trust.

Czyz, R. (2017) *The 4 O'Clock Faculty: A rogue guide to revolutionising professional development*. San Diego, CA, Dave Burgess Consulting.

Department for Education (2016) Standard for teachers' professional development. London: Crown Copyright.

Egan-Smith, D. and Finch, E. (2018) *BrewEd: Pints, pedagogy and the birth of a grassroots movement. CollectivED [2].* Leeds: Leeds Beckett University: Carnegie School of Education.

Eraut, M. (2004) 'Informal learning in the workplace', *Studies in Continuing Education*, 26, pp. 247-273.

Esterman, M. (2011) 'Meet a new kind of professional development: TeachMeet Sydney', *Teaching History,* 45, pp. 50.

Evans, L. (2014) 'Leadership for professional development and learning: enhancing our understanding of how teachers develop', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 44, pp. I-I.

Evans, L. (2018) 'Implicit and informal professional development: what it 'looks like', how it occurs, and why we need to research it', *Professional Development in Education*, pp. 1-14

Finch, E. (2019a) The #BrewEd Charter. #BrewEd. Available at: https://just-brewed.org/2019/09/28/the-brewed-charter/ (Accessed: 11 May 2020).

Finch, E. (2019b) Definitely. Daryn and I absolutely acknowledge TeachMeet as the ancestor of #BrewEd. There's a few differences but it's basically about the same thing. I know a few of the people who were there in the earliest days of TeachMeet - it's all about making connections innit? In @MREFINCH (Ed.) 7:01pm ed., Twitter.

Forte, A., Humphreys, M. and Park, T. H. (2012) 'Grassroots Professional Development: How Teachers Use Twitter'. The AAI International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media (ICWSM). Dublin, Ireland. 4-7 June. Palo Alto, Californi: AAI Press.

Foster, D. (2019) Discussion at BrewEd Preston with Richard Holme.

General Teaching Council Scotland (2019) Professional Learning. Available at: http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update/professional-learning.aspx (Accessed: 20 November 2019).

General Teaching Council Scotland (2012) The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning: supporting the development of teacher professional learning. Available at: http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/the-standards/standard-for-career-long-professional-learning-1212.pdf (Accessed: 13 May 2020).

Guskey, T. R. (2000) *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Guskey, T. R. (2002) 'Professional Development and Teacher Change', *Teachers and Teaching*, 8, pp 381-391

Jackson, E. (2019) Meet the men bringing pub-based CPD to the nation. Times Educational Supplement.

Joyce, B. R. and Showers, B. (2002) *Student achievement through staff development*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Kennedy, A. (2014) 'Understanding continuing professional development: the need for theory to impact on policy and practice'. *Professional development in education*, 40, pp. 688-697.

Kyndt, E.,Gijbels, D.,Grosemans, I. and Donche, V. (2016) 'Teachers' everyday professional development: Mapping informal learning activities, antecedents, and learning outcomes', Review of educational research, 86, pp. 1111-1150.

Linton, J. N., Carpenter, J. P. and Weber, S. (2017) 'Edcamps are for principals, too', *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99, pp. 42-45.

Lloyd, S. (2010) DIY CPD: A system for professional learning for all staff, in Earley, P. and Porritt, V. (eds.) *Effective practices in continuing professional development* London: Institute of Education Press.

McArdle, K. & Coutts, N. (2010) 'Taking teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) beyond reflection: Adding shared sense-making and collaborative engagement for professional renewal', *Studies in continuing education*, 32, pp. 201-215.

McIntosh, E. (2006) TeachMeet06 is open for business. Available at: http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2006/06/teachmeet06_is_.html (Accessed: 20 November 2019).

McIntosh, E. (2016) Ten years on from the very first unconference for educators: TeachMeet is 10. Ewan McIntosh's edu.blogs.com. Available at: https://medium.com/notosh/ten-years-on-from-the-very-first-unconference-for-educators-teachmeet-is-10-9a6052fef2a4 (Accessed: 15 May 2020).

Milton, M., & Krutka, D. (2018) Visions of Education Podcast, Episode 99: Edcamp Unconferences with Hadley Ferguson & Jeff Carpenter [online] Available at: https://visionsofed.com/2018/12/21/episode-99-edcamp-unconferences-with-hadley-ferguson-jeff-carpenter/ (Accessed: 15 May 2020).

Neil, P. S. & Morgan, C. (2003) *Continuing professional development for teachers: from induction to senior* management. London: Kogan Page.

Nerantzi, C. (2014) 'A personal journey of discoveries through a DIY open course development for professional development of teachers in Higher Education',. *Journal of pedagogic development*. 2, 4.

O'Brien, J. and Jones, K. (2014) 'Professional learning or professional development? Or continuing professional learning and development? Changing terminology, policy and practice', *Professional Development in Education*, 40, pp. 683-687.

Ofsted (2006) *The logical chain*. London: Ofsted.

Owen, H. (2008*) Open space technology: A user's guide*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Pedagoo (2019) Pedagoo for teachers, by teachers. Available at: http://www.pedagoo.org/ (Accessed: 1 November 2019).

Phan, D. X. T. (2017) "*Choice and voice": elementary teachers' perceptions of the influence of Edcamps on their professional practice*. Boston: School of Education. Boston University.

Reber, A. S. (1993) *Implicit learning and tacit knowledge: An essay on the cognitive unconscious. Oxford psychology series, No. 19.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Richter, D., Kuntner, M., Klusmann, U.,Ludkte, O. and Baumert, J. (2011) 'Professional development across the teaching career: Teachers' uptake of formal and informal learning opportunities', *Teaching and teacher education*, 27, pp. 116-126.

Rutherford, C. (2013) 'Facebook as a source of informal teacher professional development. In Education', 16(1), pp. 60-74.

Swanson, K. (2014) 'Edcamp: Teachers Take Back Professional Development', *Educational leadership*, 71, pp. 36-40.

Tschannen-Moran, M. (2017) 'The Importance of Trust in Schools', *The WERA educational journal*, 9, pp. 3-11.

Tumelty, N., Kuhn, I. and Birkwood, K. (2012) 'TeachMeet: Librarians learning from each other', *Information Literacy Beyond Library,* 2.0, pp. 191.

Wake, D. and Mills, M. (2018) 'EdCamp: Listening to the Voices of Teachers', *Issues in Teacher Education*, 27, pp. 90-106.

Wenger, E. (1998) 'Communities of practice: Learning as a social system', *Systems thinker*, 9, pp. 2-3.

Whitlock, A. M. (2016) 'Two days at Edcamp: What educators take away from the unconference model', *Journal of Continuing Education and Professional Development*, 3, pp. 1-13.